

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 and 7-14 remain pending in the application. Claims 1, 10, and 13 are independent. The sole rejection is respectfully submitted to be obviated in view of the remarks presented herein.

35 U.S.C. § 102(b) - Corsmeier

Claims 1-4 and 7-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,934,888 to Corsmeier et al. ("Corsmeier").

The rejection of claims 1-4 and 7-14 under § 102(b) based on Corsmeier is respectfully traversed. For at least the following reasons, the disclosure of Corsmeier does not anticipate Applicant's claimed invention.

As shown in Applicant's Figure 1, instant claim 1 defines a locking ring 5 for axially fixing a shaft part 3 in a ring part 7. The shaft part 3 has a peripheral groove 41 and the ring part 7 has an inner groove 21 in which the locking ring engages in a fixed state. The locking ring has (i) first partial areas that include the corner areas 51, 53 and the opposed free end areas 56, 57 that adjoin the locking ring opening and (ii) second partial areas that include the side parts 52, 54, 55. As is evident from Figure 1, when the locking ring is in a locked position, the corner areas 51,

53 and the opposed free end areas 56, 57 (which essentially make up the three corners of the polygonal configuration) are all located on the inner groove 21 of the ring part 7. The aforementioned feature is defined in claim 1, i.e., the "first partial areas [are] configured to engage in the inner groove upon resiliently pressing together the locking ring so that the locking ring is placeable in the inner groove of the ring part."

Corsmeier's "Fastener Retainer Assembly" is structurally and functionally different from Applicant's claimed invention. Corsmeier is directed to a retainer 18 having a locking ring 20 for holding a bolt 14 temporarily in place during assembly or disassembly. The retainer 18 has an annular shoulder 40. The bolt 14 has an annular groove 28. Corsmeier's Figure 4 shows the locking ring 20 in the locked position. However, Corsmeier teaches that when the locking ring is in the locked position, the opposed ends 46, 48 of the locking ring are located in the annular groove 28 of the bolt 14, not in the annular shoulder 40. Therefore, Corsmeier's configuration is structurally different from Applicant's claimed configuration.

There are operational advantages associated with Applicant's claimed configuration which make it superior to the Corsmeier device. For example, Applicant discloses with reference to Figures 3a and 3b that "the locking ring 5 is then released, so that it snaps resiliently with its corner areas 51, 53 and the corner areas 56, 57 onto the base wall 22 of the inner groove 21"

(specification page 6). However, Corsmeier describes the operation of his locking ring only in the context of snapping inwardly, i.e., "the locking ring 20 snaps into the annular groove 28 formed in the bolt shank 24" (Corsmeier column 5, lines 4-54, specifically lines 14-17).

More specifically, in connection with the advantages that can be attained by arranging the opposed free end areas 56, 57 in the inner groove 21 of the ring part 7, see instant specification page 2, paragraph 3, through page 3, paragraph 1. It is of particular significance and advantage that the end areas at the opening and/or partition of the inventive locking ring 5 are arranged totally in the inner groove 21 of the ring part 7 after the locking ring 5 is expanded. The result is that these end areas 56, 57 cannot be displaced axially, particularly when the shaft part 3 is inserted into the ring part 7. Therefore, the locking ring 5 is held totally constant and smooth in the inner groove 21 (see also the paragraph bridging specification pages 6 and 7). However, the aforementioned feature of the claimed invention is of no import in connection with the retainer assembly of Corsmeier, because there, the locking ring is only retaining a bolt during assembly or after disassembly.

Again, with Applicant's claimed invention, the configuration prevents the free end areas 56, 57 from moving axially when they are engaging the inner groove 21. When relative axial movements between the shaft part 3 and the ring part 7 occur,

any possible damage to the free end areas 56, 57 is prevented. The locking ring 5 is charged equally around its circumference because the end areas are engaging the inner groove 21 in the same manner as the corner areas 51, 53. Thereby, both the durability and the operability of the inventive locking ring 5 are remarkably extended.

Since Corsmeier does not meet each feature of the claimed invention, Corsmeier does not anticipate the invention defined by Applicant's claim 1. Claims 2-4, 7-9, and 12 are allowable because they depend from claim 1, and for the subject matter recited therein.

Independent claims 10 and 13 are similarly allowable because they both include at least each feature of the invention defined in claim 1. Claims 11 and 14 are allowable because they depend, respectively, from claims 10 and 13, and for the subject matter recited therein.

In view of the foregoing, this application is now in condition for allowance. If the examiner believes that another

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interview might expedite prosecution, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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